

Cleanup of Former St. Helens Creosote Site (ECSI 959)

Background

This fact sheet describes cleanup issues related to the 49-acre site currently owned by the Port of St. Helens at 1550 Railroad Ave. in St. Helens. The site is along the confluence of Scappoose Bay and the Multnomah Channel. Milton Creek borders the site's western portion.

The site was used for wood treating from 1912 to 1960, with creosote being the primary wood treating compound. The plant was mostly dismantled and the equipment was sold in late 1960.

The Port of St Helens purchased the property from Pope and Talbot in 1963. The Port removed the remaining structures and filled much of the site with dredge sands between 1963 and 1973. Niedermeyer-Martin Company leased the site from the Port in 1973 and built a pole peeling facility over the entire site. Niedermeyer-Martin operated at the facility until 1991. Currently, Columbia River Forest Products is operating on the property's western portion. The eastern portion is vacant.

Environmental investigations

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) started environmental investigations at the site in 1989 at DEQ's request. EPA's investigation included sampling of on-site soils, and surface water and sediments in Milton Creek and the Multnomah Channel. Results of EPA's investigation showed significant contamination of the subsurface soils and sediments with polynuclear aromatic hydrocarbon (PAH) compounds, which are the primary constituents of creosote. Pentachlorophenol (PCP), arsenic and other metals were also present in subsurface soils at elevated levels. EPA recommended that further investigations occur to determine the extent of contamination in soils, groundwater, surface water and sediments.

DEQ issued an administrative Consent Order to Pope and Talbot and the Port of St. Helens in April 1995 to perform a remedial investigation and cleanup feasibility study.

Pope and Talbot completed the bulk of the property's cleanup investigation. Creosote was the main contaminant found at the site. The investigation concluded that cleanup was necessary to control the discharge of creosote

contamination in the subsurface out into the bay. Pope and Talbot prepared a draft feasibility study work plan for DEQ review and approval that outlined several cleanup strategies for the site.

Pope and Talbot declared bankruptcy in November 2007, prior to addressing DEQ comments on the draft work plan. The company has since been liquidated, leaving the Port with responsibility for existing environmental contamination at the site.

Current investigation activities

Cleanup work at the site has largely been suspended since Pope & Talbot's bankruptcy. DEQ is currently working with the Port to determine the Port's ability to fund completion of the feasibility study and the cleanup in general. DEQ estimates complete cleanup could cost in excess of \$10 million to \$15 million. These estimates are highly uncertain and depend on whether significant creosote contamination extends into the bay sediments, which could increase cleanup costs.

What happens next?

The Port has subdivided the property into Areas 1 (western) and 2 (eastern) to allow DEQ to consider issuance of a conditional "no further action" declaration for Area 2. Wood treating activities occurred primarily in Area 1. The conditional no further action, which will be issued as soon as the subdivision is completed and the legal description is available, should facilitate the Port's efforts to lease this unutilized area of the property and provide needed revenue for future cleanup work.

DEQ has required that the Port control access to the bay sediment adjacent to Area 1 of the site, where observable sediment contamination is present.

Additional sediment investigation and the feasibility study need to be completed for the site to support a final cleanup plan to be selected by DEQ. Assuming that funding is available from the Port for these tasks, selection of the site's cleanup remedy could be completed by mid to late 2011.

DEQ has had discussions with the federal Superfund program on assisting with the project



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if it is determined that the Port cannot cover cleanup costs.

Further information

Documents about this site are available for review at DEQ's Northwest Region Office, 2020 S.W. Fourth Ave., Portland. The site documents can be found in the Northwest Region Environmental Cleanup Site Information (ECSI) database under ECSI No. 959. To access the site summary information in DEQ's ECSI database, go to

<http://www.deq.state.or.us/lq/ECSI/ecsiquery.asp>

, then enter 959 in the Site ID box and click "Submit" at the bottom of the page. Next click the link labeled 959 in the Site ID/Info column.

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Alternative formats

Alternative formats (Braille, large type) of this document are available. Contact DEQ's Office of Communications, Portland, at (503) 229-5696 or call toll-free in Oregon at 1-800-452-4011, ext. 5696.